

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application. Any claims that have been canceled are to be considered canceled without prejudice as to their resubmission:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-2 canceled.

Claim 3 (Currently amended): An energy-efficient method of packaging a food product, comprising the steps of:

selecting a blow-molded PET plastic container having a sidewall with ~~a plurality of three~~
or more continuous peripheral vertically-spaced grooves, a dome located above
said sidewall having a blown, wide-mouth opening adapted to receive a sealed
closure, a footed base below said sidewall, an upper label bumper extending
around the upper end of said sidewall subjacent said dome, a lower label bumper
extending around the lower end of said sidewall superadjacent said base;

hot-filling the container with said food product;

capping the filled container;

heating the filled and capped container for a time at a temperature sufficient to pasteurize
said food product; and

cooling the pasteurized filled and capped container to ambient temperature.

Claim 4 (original): The method according to claim 3 wherein said food product is a volatile vegetable in an aqueous medium.

Claim 5 (original): The method according to claim 4 wherein said volatile vegetable is selected from the group consisting of: pickles, relish, sauerkraut and artichokes.

Claim 6 (original): The method according to claim 3 wherein said filled and capped container is heated to a temperature in a range of at least about 190 - 210°F for a period in a range of 5 - 20 minutes.

Claim 7 (original): The method according to claim 3 wherein said hot-filling steps occur at a temperature of at least about 180°F.

Claim 8 (original): The method according to claim 3 wherein the container is at ambient temperature prior to hot-filling.

Claim 9 (Currently amended): An energy-efficient method of packaging a volatile food product that requires pasteurization at elevated temperatures after the food product is packaged in a container that has been filled and capped, comprising the steps of:

hot-filling a blow-molded plastic container with said volatile food product at a temperature of at least 180°F, said container having a sidewall stiffened against distortion having three or more continuous peripheral vertically-spaced grooves, a

dome located above said sidewall and having an opening adapted to receive a sealed closure, a base located below said sidewall, an upper label bumper extending around an upper end of said sidewall subjacent said dome, and a lower label bumper extending around a lower end of said sidewall superadjacent said base;

capping said container immediately after said hot-filling step;

heating said container and packaged volatile food product after said capping step to a temperature in a range of at least about 190-210°F for a time sufficient to pasteurize said food product without subjecting the base to undesirable distortion;

and

cooling said container and packaged volatile food product after said heating step to ambient temperature.

Claim 10 (previously presented): A method according to claim 9, wherein said base of said container is a pressure-resistant footed base that withstands super-baric pressures experienced within said container after said container is hot-filled, capped and heated and that withstands a swing from super-baric pressures to sub-baric pressures experienced within said container as said volatile food product cools to ambient temperature.

Claim 11 (previously presented): A method according to claim 10, wherein said base has a plurality of radially extending ribs that extend outwardly from adjacent a longitudinal axis of

said container toward an outer surface of said base, and wherein said ribs rigidify said base by resisting flexural movement of said base during said hot-filling, heating and cooling steps.

Claim 12 (previously presented): A method according to claim 11, wherein said sidewall is cylindrical except for a plurality of vertically-spaced, circumferentially-extending, inset grooves, said grooves having equal spacing therebetween and enable side sidewall of said container to accommodate, without undesirable distortion, super-baric pressures experienced within said container during said heating step and a swing from super-baric pressures to sub-baric pressures experienced within said container as said volatile food product cools to ambient temperature.

Claim 13 (previously presented): The method according to claim 12, wherein said food product is a volatile vegetable in an aqueous medium.

Claim 14 (previously presented): The method according to claim 13, wherein said volatile vegetable is selected from the group consisting of: pickles, relish, sauerkraut and artichokes.

Claim 15 (previously presented): The method according to claim 14, wherein during said heating step said container and packaged volatile food product is heated to a temperature in a range of at least about 190-210°F for a period in a range of about 5 to 20 minutes.

Claim 16 (previously presented): A method according to claim 15, wherein said opening is a wide mouth opening having a diameter sufficient to afford access to and withdrawal of said food product by means of a conventional item of tableware.

Claim 17 (previously presented): A method according to claim 16, wherein said sidewall of said blow molded plastic container has a crystallinity in excess of 25%.

Claim 18 (previously presented): A method according to claim 17, wherein said wide mouth opening of said blow molded plastic container is defined by blow molded, threaded neck.

Claim 19 (previously presented): A method according to claim 18, wherein said container is made of polyethylene terephthalate (PET).

Claim 20 (previously presented): The method according to claim 3, wherein a diameter of the wide-mouth opening is at least about 80% of a diameter of a cross-section of the container at the sidewall.

Claim 21 (previously presented): The method according to claim 9, wherein a diameter of the opening is at least about 80% of a diameter of a cross-section of the container at the sidewall.